

Town of Amherst
POLICE DEPARTMENT
Strategic Plan FY14-18 Addendum
Annual Review of Goals and Initiatives
September 14, 2015

In accordance with the town's strategic planning process - as implemented by the Board of Selectmen two years ago - the Amherst Police Department has completed the second annual review of its own strategic plan with the conclusion of fiscal year 2015 (FY15). Strategic initiatives that were scheduled for completion in FY15 have been evaluated, and those initiatives designated for FY16 and beyond have been reassessed in light of relevant trends or developments.

The Amherst Police Department's FY14-18 strategic plan consists of four essential goals, with each goal comprised of two or more strategic initiatives to be implemented across various years. The following review will address each goal and set of initiatives individually:

GOAL #1: Provide Improved Communication and Community Services

▶ Continued development and implementation of community survey (FY14-18; no cost)

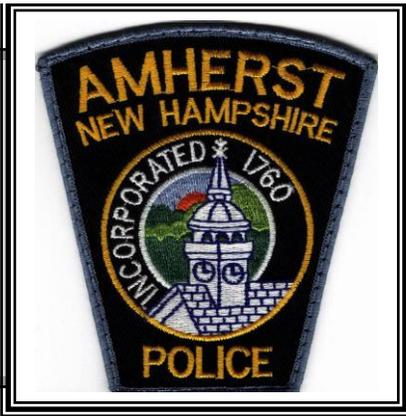
The Department first implemented a community survey in August of 2013 to help provide feedback for the development of strategic goals and initiatives. In keeping with a biennial implementation plan, the Department conducted its second community survey in August of 2015 (*see Appendix A*). Among other key comparisons, the 2015 survey showed a 92% Very Good-Excellent rating for Overall Police Services vs. 88% in 2013. The community survey process remains an important source of feedback and evaluation for the agency.

▶ Improvement and consolidation of website (FY14-18; no cost)

In FY14, the Department completed the consolidation of its independent *amherstpolice.com* website with the town's *amherstnh.gov* website. In addition, the Department's overall site was updated to reflect current information, and several new pages were added to help showcase and provide information on the many services that the Amherst Police Department provides. Over the last year, the Department added a Facebook page (*Amherst NH Police Communications*) to help update citizens with relevant public safety and community-oriented information. The recent 2015 survey shows that 80% of residents feel informed about public safety concerns vs. 76% in 2013.

▶ Increase availability of community programs (FY15; no cost)

The Department was able to implement this initiative ahead of schedule in FY14 through a partnership with the Amherst Lions and Milford Rotary club. Funds were donated to cover the cost of Rape Aggression Defense (R.A.D.) training suits, and so far the Department has hosted ten training sessions for the general public as well as for specific groups (e.g., female Souhegan High School students, and female staff at the Amherst Middle School). The Department also added an additional instructor to the R.A.D. staff, which is now comprised of one male officer and two female officers. The 2015 survey



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showed an 86% Very Good-Excellent rating for police Community Involvement vs. 80% in 2013.

GOAL #2: Increase the Quality and Level of Officer Training to Maintain Professional Standards and Address Community Concerns

► Increase in-service officer training hours (FY15; \$1,500 annually)

The Department seeks to provide quality, ongoing officer training to maintain pace with law enforcement trends and investigative techniques and to address specific community concerns (e.g., burglary and fraud investigation). Additional FY15 funding was approved for this purpose, and the continuation of that funding will be sought annually. This additional funding became especially important in FY15 due to recent and unanticipated reductions in funding and training previously available through NH police academy.

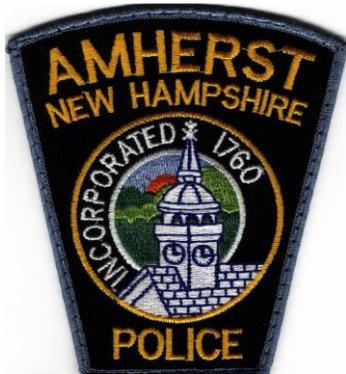
► Graduate all command staff from the Command Training Institute, Roger Williams University (FY15; \$3,000 one-time cost)

As mentioned in the strategic plan, the Command Training Institute is the preeminent training program in New England for police supervisors, and has traditionally been attended by all Department command staff. Formerly hosted at Babson College for many years, the program is now affiliated with Roger Williams University. The training is essential for the development of our Department's supervisors who are tasked with providing effective management and liability reduction for the Department. Three of the Department's four command staff members had yet to attend the program, and funds were approved for FY15 to send the remaining sergeant and two lieutenants – all of whom completed the training on schedule in FY15.

GOAL #3: Improve Department Efficiency and Patrol Area Coverage

► Increase full-time clerical staff (FY18; \$72,500 annually)

The single, full-time executive assistant handles payroll, secretary to the Chief, secretary to the Prosecutor, software/computer maintenance and support (including support to Fire and Communications), and records management. Comparably-sized NH police agencies employ an average of 2.7 full-time support personnel. The Board of Selectmen approved the hiring of an additional, part-time administrative support employee in FY15. The additional position has resulted in increased efficiency and delivery of related services (e.g., timely data entry and improved turnaround time on requests for documents and reports). The position has also facilitated more timely compliance with federal crime reporting mandates which, among



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other things, are tied to federal grant eligibility. However, further administrative assistance is still needed in the prosecutor's office and the Department will be looking to transition this position to full-time status in FY18.

▶ Participate in Attorney General's Drug Task Force (FY18; no cost)

This multi-jurisdictional unit is managed by the Office of NH Attorney General, and participation in program facilitates priority availability of DTF investigators for assignment to Amherst investigations. However, recent fluctuation in the status and structure of the unit has resulted in the development of county task forces. Hillsborough County recently initiated a new Street Crimes Task Force in FY15 which is comprised of Amherst, Bedford, Merrimack, Milford, and other Hillsborough County police departments on a part-time, as needed basis. Future consideration of NH (state) Drug Task Force participation will be dependent upon the success and performance of the county task force.

▶ Improve property room inventory management (FY14; no cost)

Major improvements in the management of the Department's evidence and property rooms were completed in FY14. In addition to improving overall efficiency of operation (e.g., return of lost, found, or seized property), this initiative achieved the goal of maximizing the amount of useable space in our property and evidence rooms which remain undersized for the Department's overall needs.

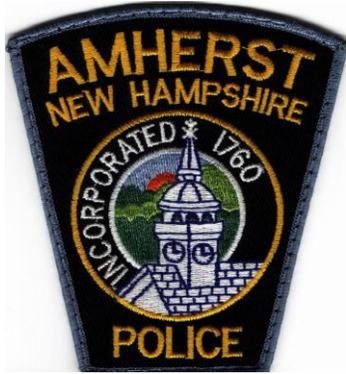
▶ Increase full-time police officer staff (FY17 and FY19; \$83,000 annually)

As mentioned in the strategic plan, the Department's complement of 18 full-time officers is well below the federal and state average of 21.6 officers for comparably-sized communities. No patrol positions have been added to the roster since 1998 despite a 40% increase in service calls to the Route 101A business district alone in recent years. Department goals to restructure and improve patrol sector coverage (increasing police presence in our neighborhoods) hinge upon the Department's ability to hire additional personnel. The two positions previously outlined for FY16 and FY18 have been carried forward for proposed implementation in FY17 and FY19.

GOAL #4: Improve Facilities and Equipment

▶ Replace undercover vehicle (FY 16; \$20,000 one-time cost)

Originally slated for FY16, the Board authorized funding ahead of schedule for vehicle acquisition in FY15. The vehicle facilitates the effective and necessary performance of the agency's many overall investigative responsibilities. The Department took delivery of the vehicle in June, and it was immediately put into use on July 1st to assist with enforcement



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of the new Hands Free law and also with undercover investigations which were ongoing at the time.

► Expand and renovate building facilities (feasibility study by FY16)

The original police department was built in 1980 with renovations in 1996. The overall structure is roughly 10,000 square feet with police and EMS each occupying roughly 5,000 square feet. Police stations in comparable communities average 12,000 square feet. With time, the inadequate size of the facility becomes only more apparent. Over the last year, the addition of a much needed part-time administrative assistant has resulted in the loss of the Department's victim assistance room in order to accommodate another desk. Work spaces are undersized with no useable space left. The recent merger of Fire and EMS has provided potential momentum for Department's acquisition of lower level currently occupied by EMS.

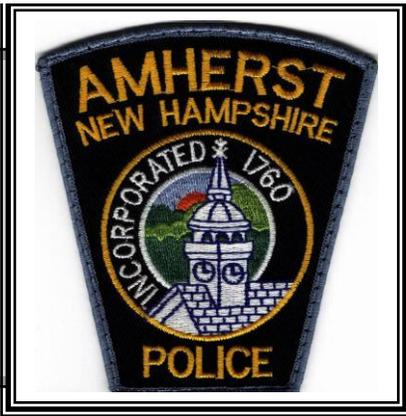
Budget Impact – FY17 Initiatives

<u>FY16 Adopted Budget</u>		<u>Projected FY17 Starting Budget</u>	<u>% Increase</u>
\$2,296,802		\$2,378,536	3.6%
<u>Proposed Initiatives</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Adjusted FY16 Budget</u>	<u>% Increase</u>
Full Time Officer	\$83,000	\$2,461,536	7.2%

**FY17-19 Police
 *Projected Budget Comparison**

	<u>FY17</u>	<u>FY18</u>	<u>FY19</u>
<u>Budget:</u>	\$2,461,536	\$2,606,530	\$2,788,962
<u>% Increase:</u>	7.2%	5.9%	6.9%

**Figures include all assumptions and initiatives*



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Amherst Public Safety Communications Center
Dispatching Amherst Police, Fire, EMS, and
Department of Public Works

► Upgrade radio communications equipment (FY14)

Phases one and two of a multiyear communications infrastructure upgrade effort were completed in FY14. The improvements included upgrading to simulcast radio dispatching and the installation of state of the art microwave radio transmission equipment on existing radio tower structures in Amherst. Additionally, a memorandum of understanding was developed with the United States Air Force Tracking Station in New Boston which allowed the installation of microwave equipment on the base's 400 foot tower. That vital communication link has improved radio reception in areas of Amherst which had previously been deficient and has strengthened Amherst's interoperability with surrounding towns.

► Improve telephone caller satisfaction rating (FY15)

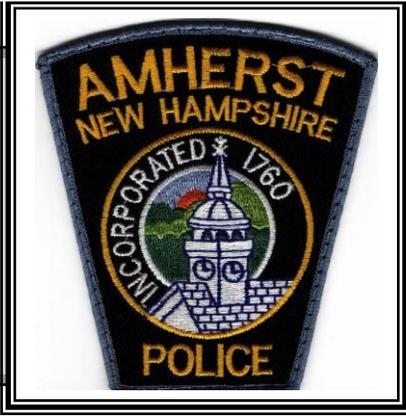
The Amherst Police Department's FY14 community survey resulted in an 81% *Very Good to Excellent* caller satisfaction rating for the dispatch center. Amherst's dispatchers are the first point of contact for emergency services, and the Communications Center places a strong focus on continual quality improvement. The 2015 survey showed an increase in the citizen-caller satisfaction rating from 81% to 85% over the last two years.

► Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) manual (FY15)

As mentioned in the strategic plan, task-oriented guidelines and protocols have always been in place in order to ensure the efficient response of our emergency services. However, a policies/procedures manual was never in place (to address, e.g., personnel practices, administration and management specific to the Communications Center). Development of the manual was completed on schedule in FY15. The manual solidified employee guidelines and expectations and further enhanced professionalism within the Communications Center.

► Increase and maintain yearly capital reserve fund for future Communications Center repairs and upgrades (FY14-18; \$15,000 annual warrant article)

Each year, the Communications Center seeks the addition of \$15,000 to the capital reserve



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fund. The voters once again showed strong support in their approval of this warrant article for FY16. The fund helps to support major communication repairs or upgrades during the course of the year and is also drawn upon when matching funds are required for federal communications center grants (\$30,400 was expended over the last three years). Most importantly, the fund is designed to provide financial security in the face of anticipated, future expenses (such as potential radio tower replacement in 2020, and replacement radio consoles in 2023 – combined expenses which may reach up to \$180,000).

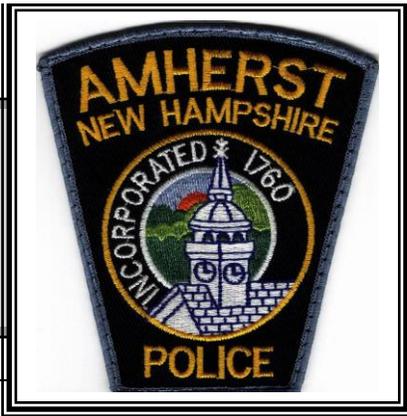
► **Increase yearly in-service dispatcher training hours (FY15; \$2,000 annually)**

Quality and continued training is important to maintaining professional standards and adapting to developing trends in the communications field. Dispatchers previously averaged eight hours of in-service training per year at the time this initiative was first funded in FY15. That average has increased to 16 hours per year with the close of FY15, and represents an important step toward continued quality improvement and maintenance of professional standards.

FY17-19 Communications
***Projected Budget Comparison**

	<u>FY17</u>	<u>FY18</u>	<u>FY19</u>
<u>Budget:</u>	\$380,987	\$399,970	\$419,498
<u>% Increase:</u>	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%

**Figures include all assumptions and initiatives*

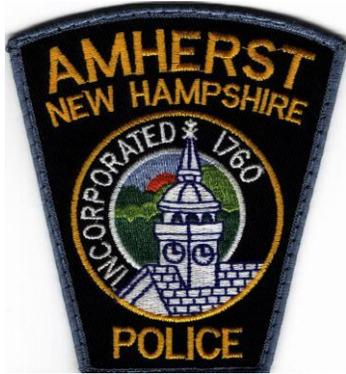


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Five Year Calendar

	<i>FY 14</i>	<i>FY 15</i>	<i>FY 16</i>	<i>FY 17</i>	<i>FY 18</i>
Goals 1.1-1.3 Strengthen Services to the Community					
1.1 Continue to develop and implement community survey	X		X		X
1.2 Improve Department website	X	X	X	X	X
1.3 Increase delivery of community programs		X			
Goals 2.1-2.2 Increase Quality and Level of Officer Training					
2.1 Increase in-service officer training hours		X			
2.2 Graduate all Department command staff from Command Training Institute, Roger Williams University		X			
Goals 3.1-3.4 Improve Internal Department Operations					
3.1 Increase full-time clerical staff (<i>part-time position in place</i>)		X			X
3.2 Improve property room inventory management	X				
3.3 Increase full-time police officer staff				X	
3.4 Participate in New Hampshire Attorney General's Drug Task Force					X
Goals 4.1-4.2 Improve Facilities and Equipment					
4.1 Expand and renovate building facilities (i.e., complete feasibility study of emergency medical service relocation)				X	
4.2 Replace undercover vehicle			X		
Goals 5.1-5.5 Amherst Public Safety Communications Center					
5.1 Upgrade communications center equipment	X				
5.2 Improve telephone caller satisfaction rating			X		X
5.3 Develop standard operating procedures (SOP) manual		X			
5.4 Maintain CRF for long term capital improvements		X	X	X	X
5.5 Increase yearly in-service dispatcher training hours		X			

Initiatives completed and/or on schedule for completion

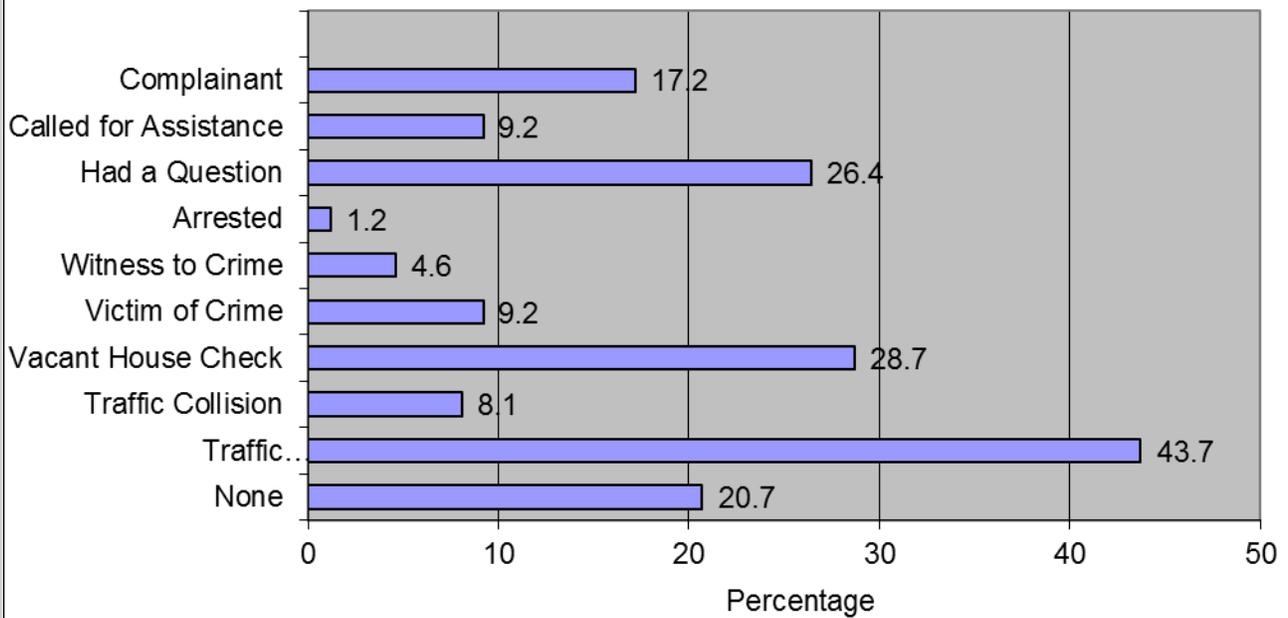
Initiatives rescheduled and/or moved forward to subsequent year(s)



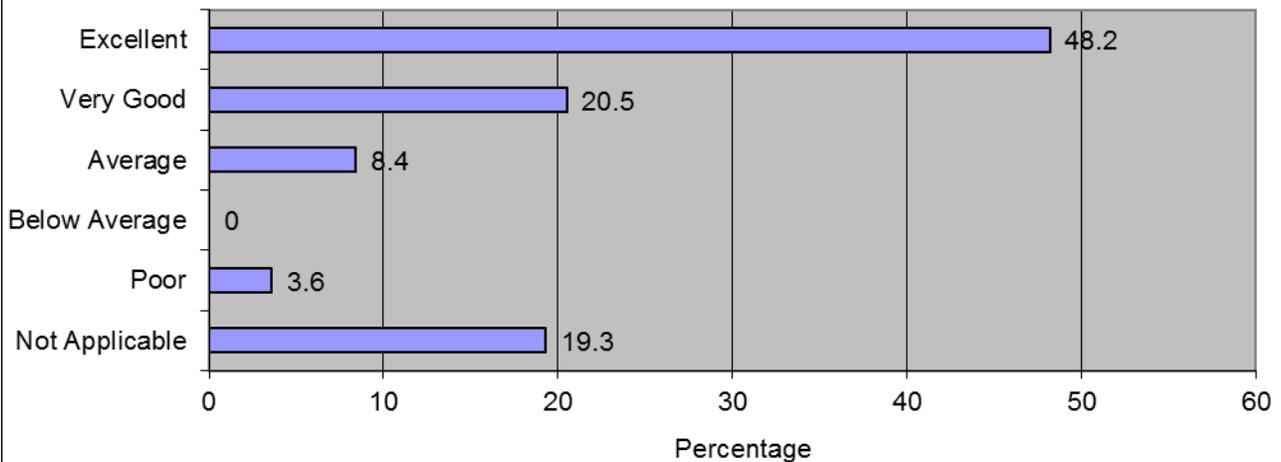
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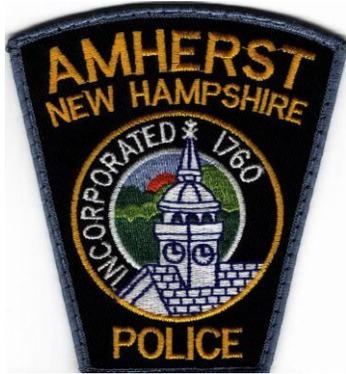
Appendix A
2015 Community Survey

Please mark the types of contact you have had with the Amherst Police Department



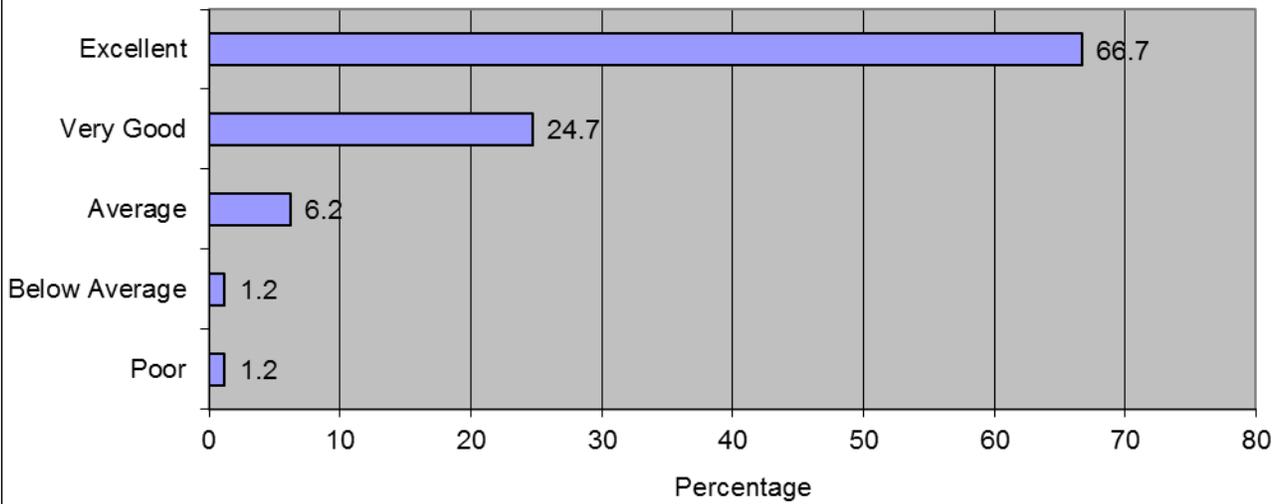
On your most recent contact with the Amherst Police Department, how would you rate the helpfulness of the person you first spoke with on the telephone?



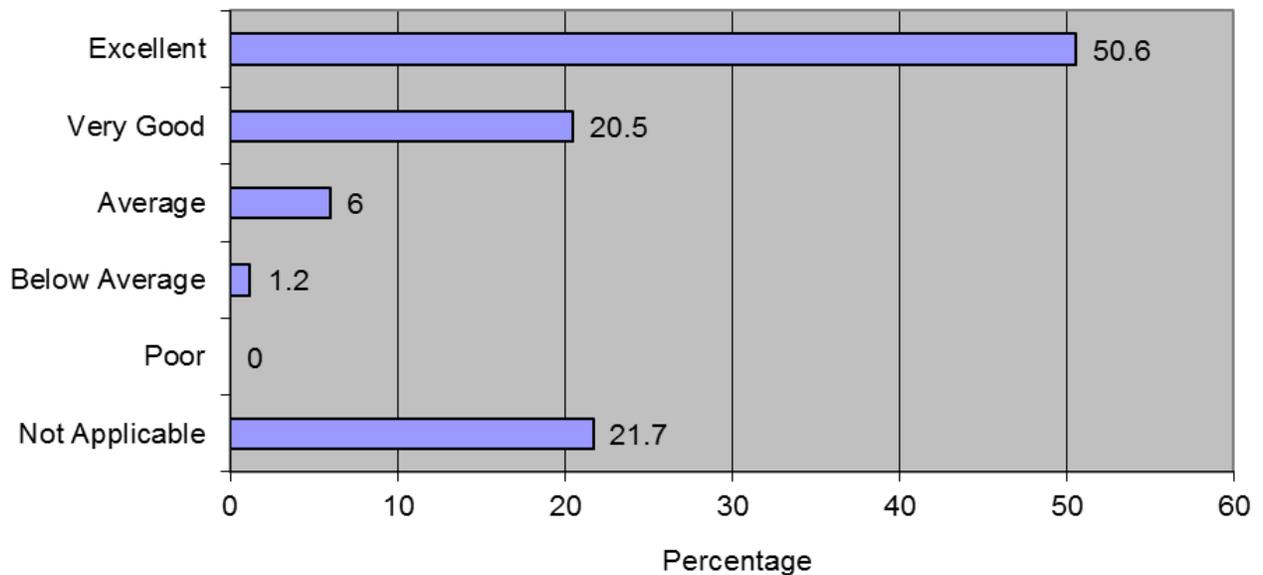


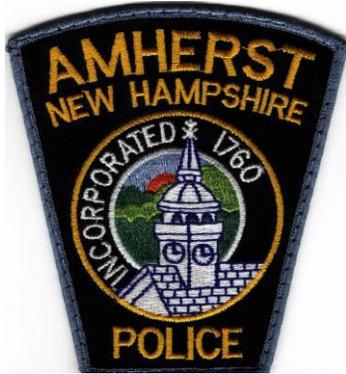
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Community Survey, Cont.

How would you rate the professional demeanor of the officer (or other police employee) that handled your incident?



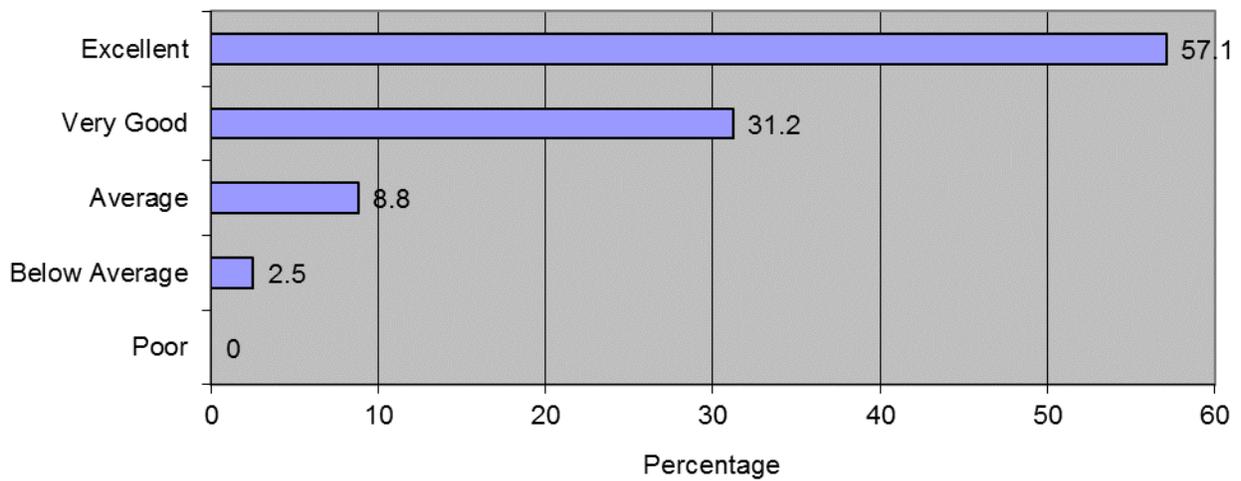
How would you rate the response time for your latest contact with the Amherst Police Department?



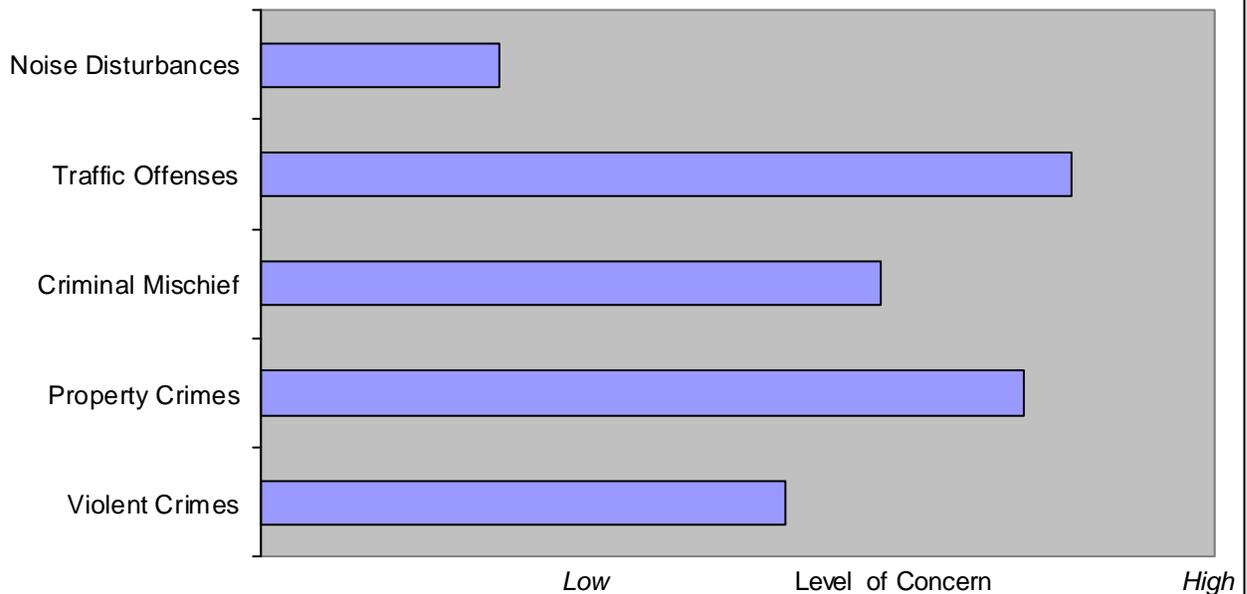


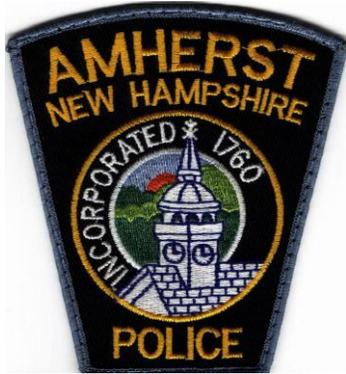
Town of Amherst
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Community Survey, Cont.

After your contact with all of the Amherst Police Department employees involved in this incident, what is your overall impression of the Amherst Police Department?



How concerned are you with each of the following in town?

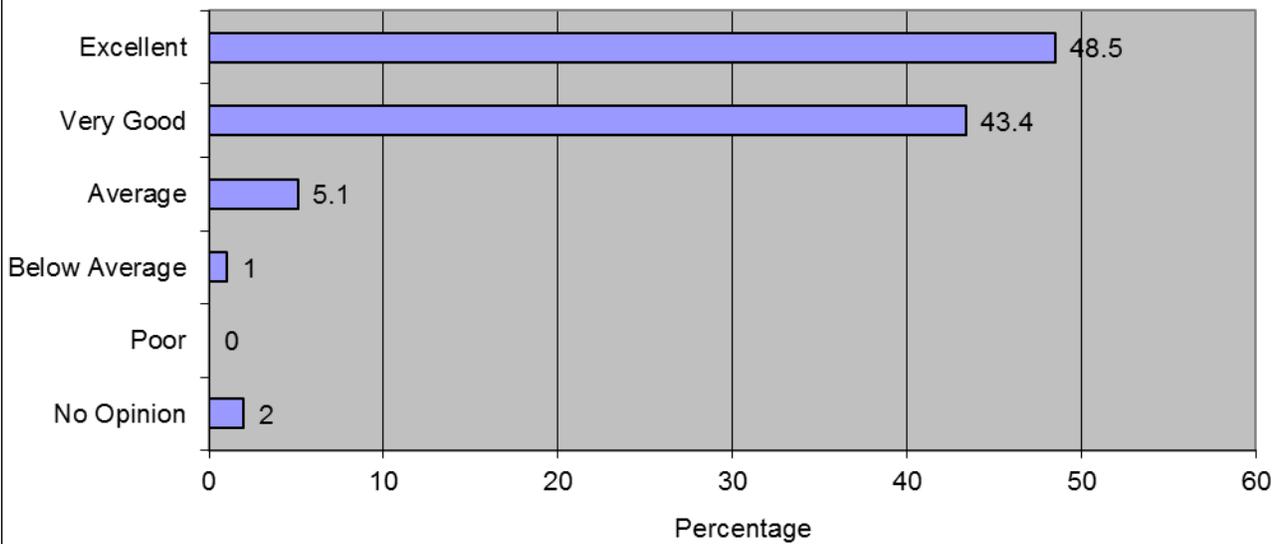




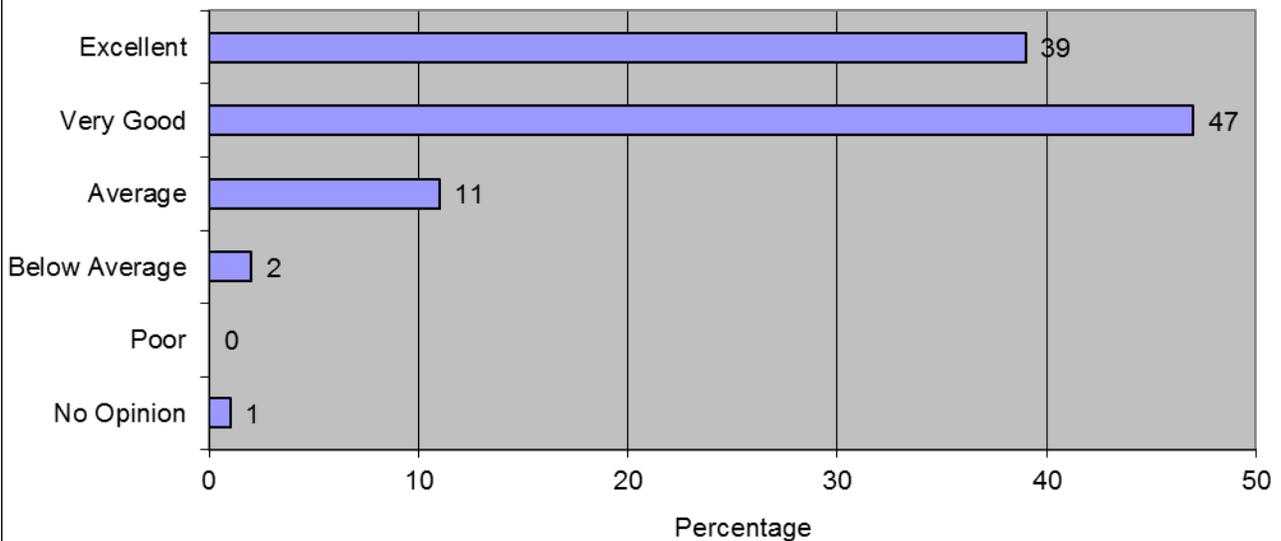
Town of Amherst
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Community Survey, Cont.

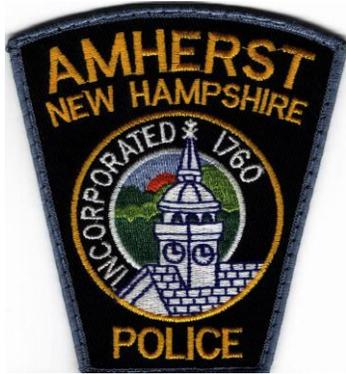
Please rate the following services provided
by the Amherst Police Department:

Overall Service



Police Visibility

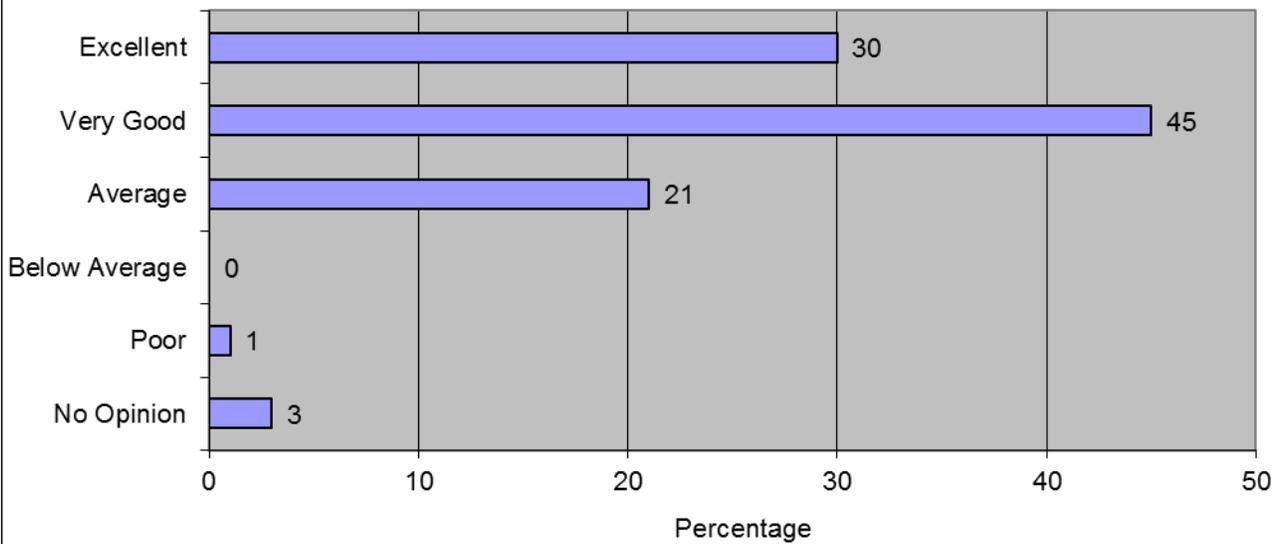




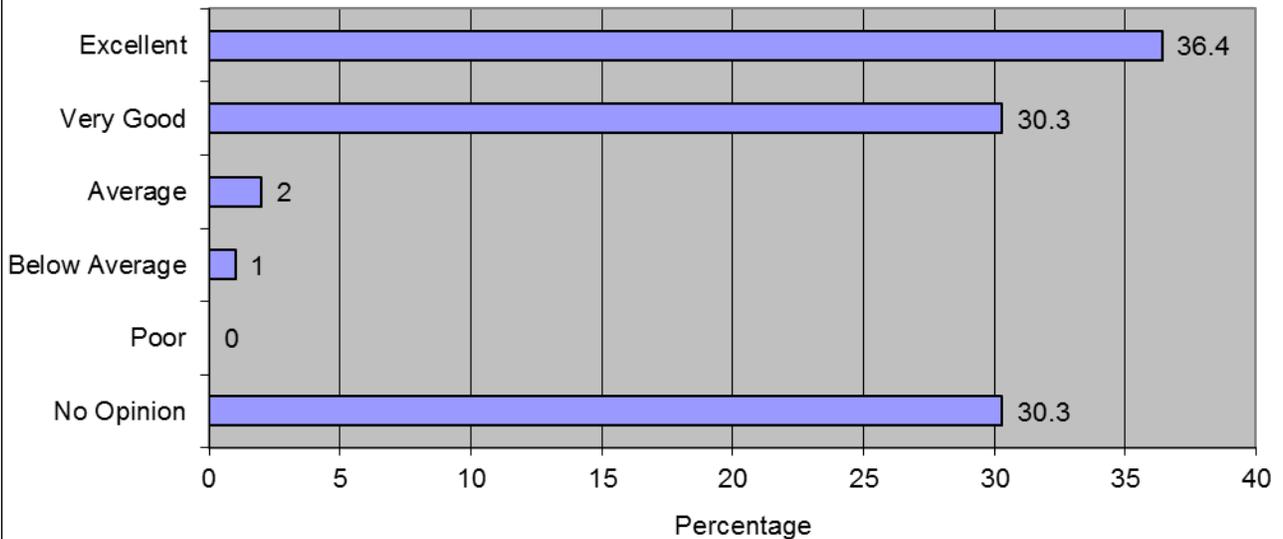
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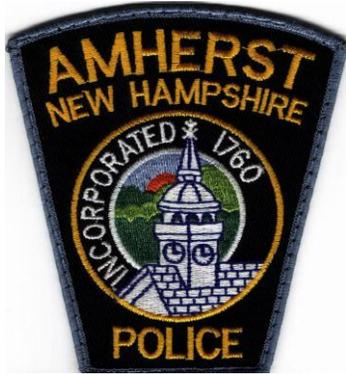
Please rate the following services provided
 by the Amherst Police Department:

Traffic Enforcement



Services to Schools

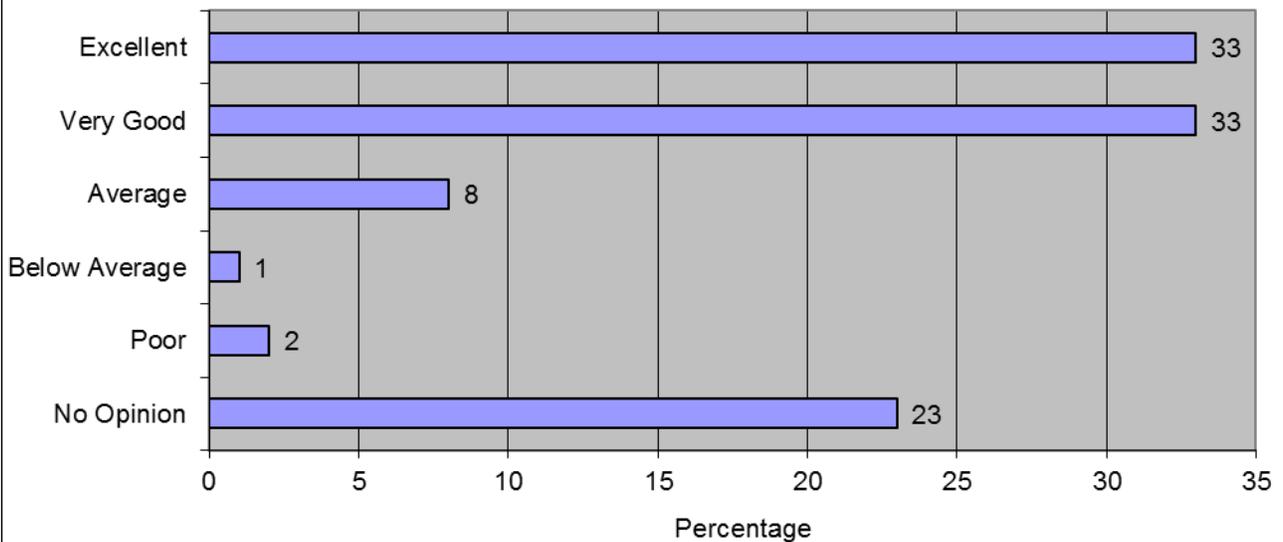




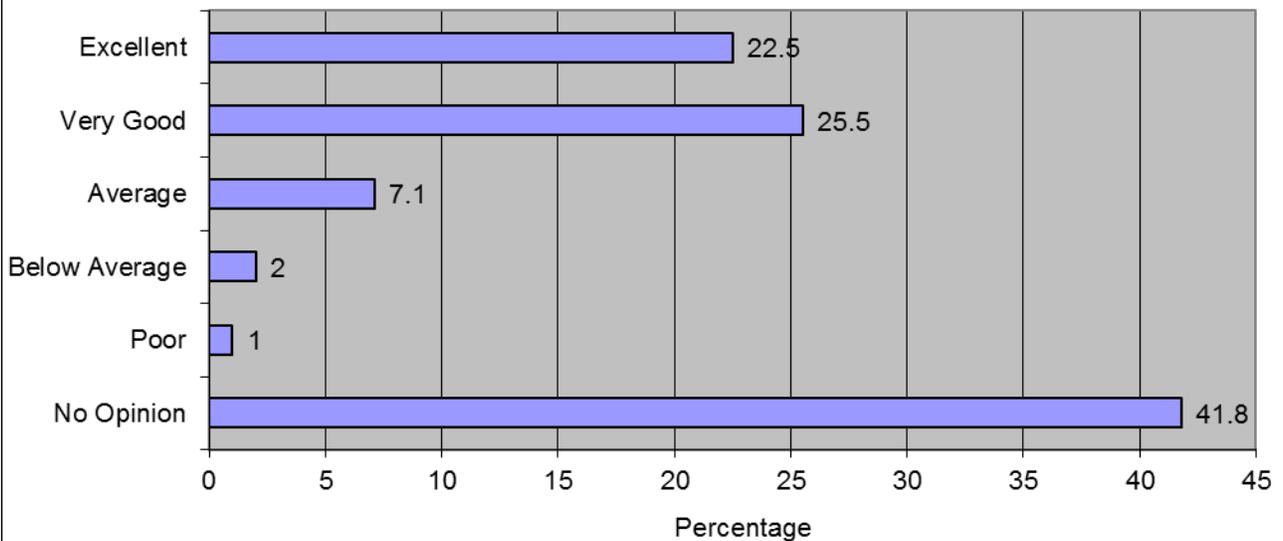
Town of Amherst
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Community Survey, Cont.

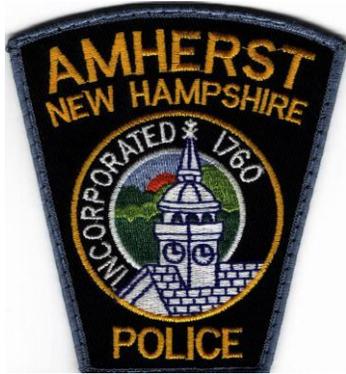
Please rate the following services provided
by the Amherst Police Department:

Community Involvement



Crime/Incident Investigation

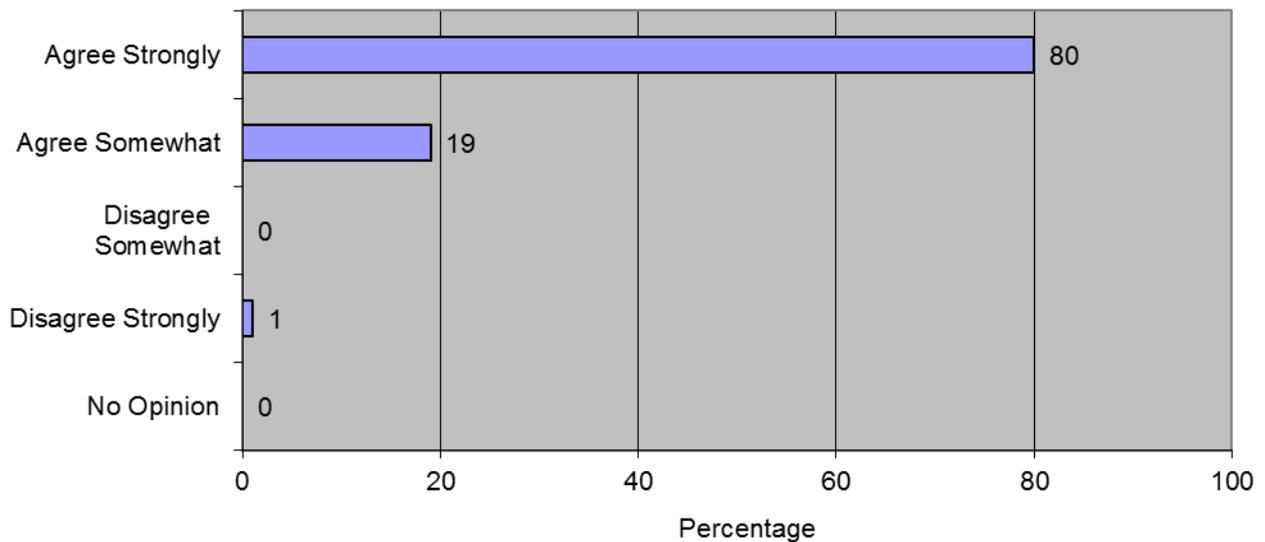




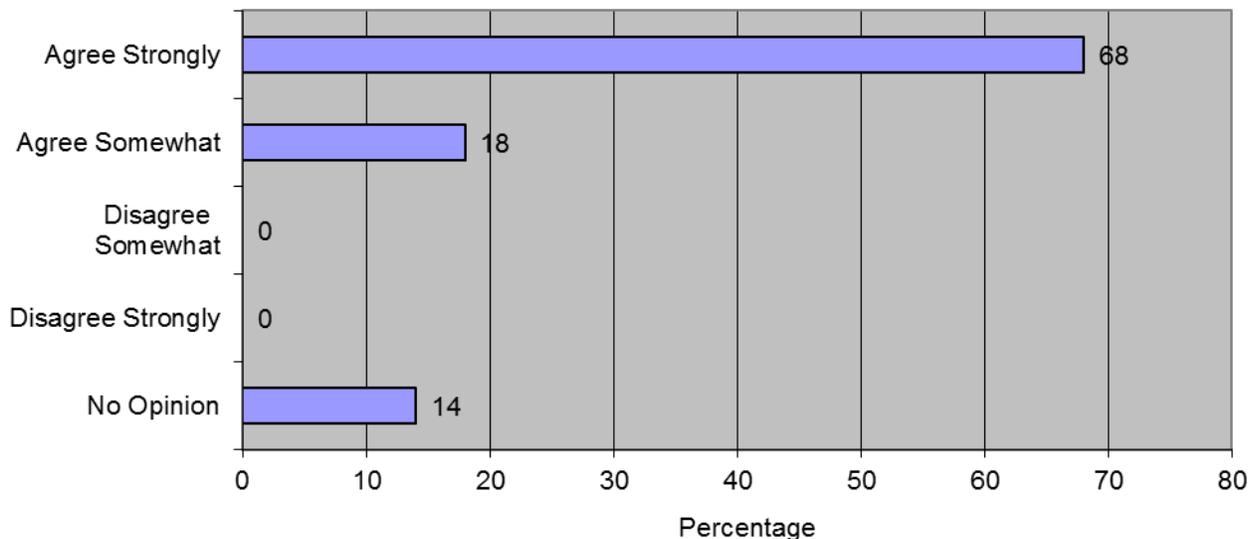
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Community Survey, Cont.

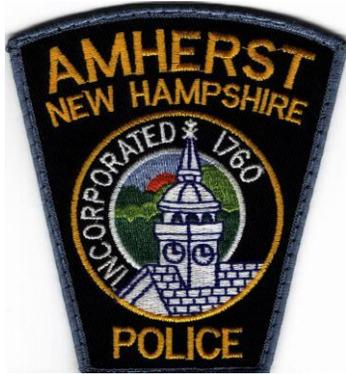
Please rate the following services provided by the Amherst Police Department:

I feel safe in my neighborhood



I feel that children are safe in my neighborhood

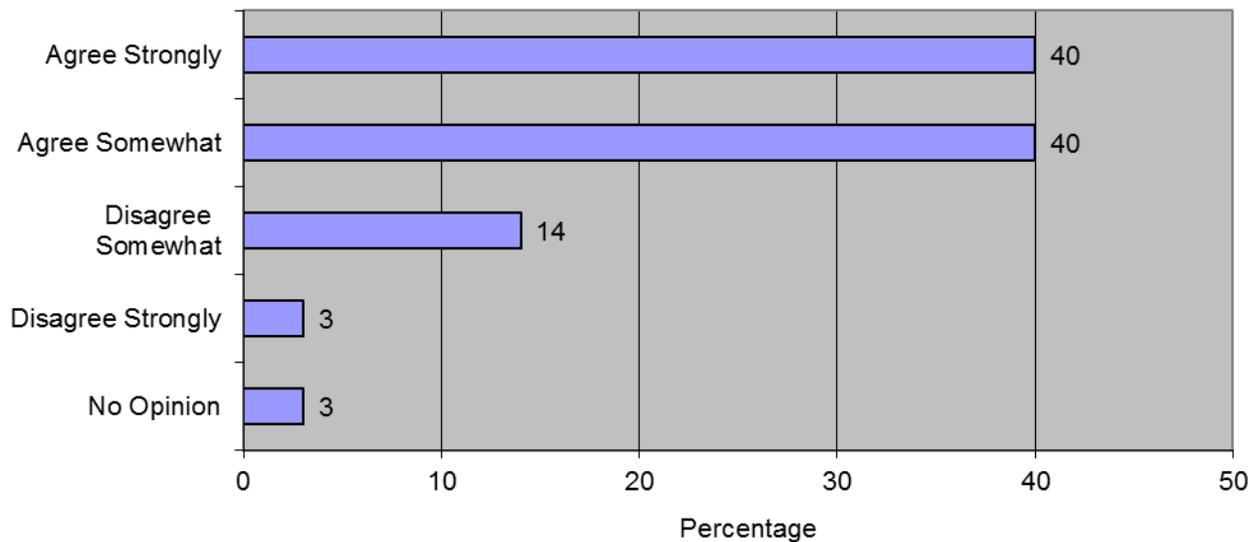




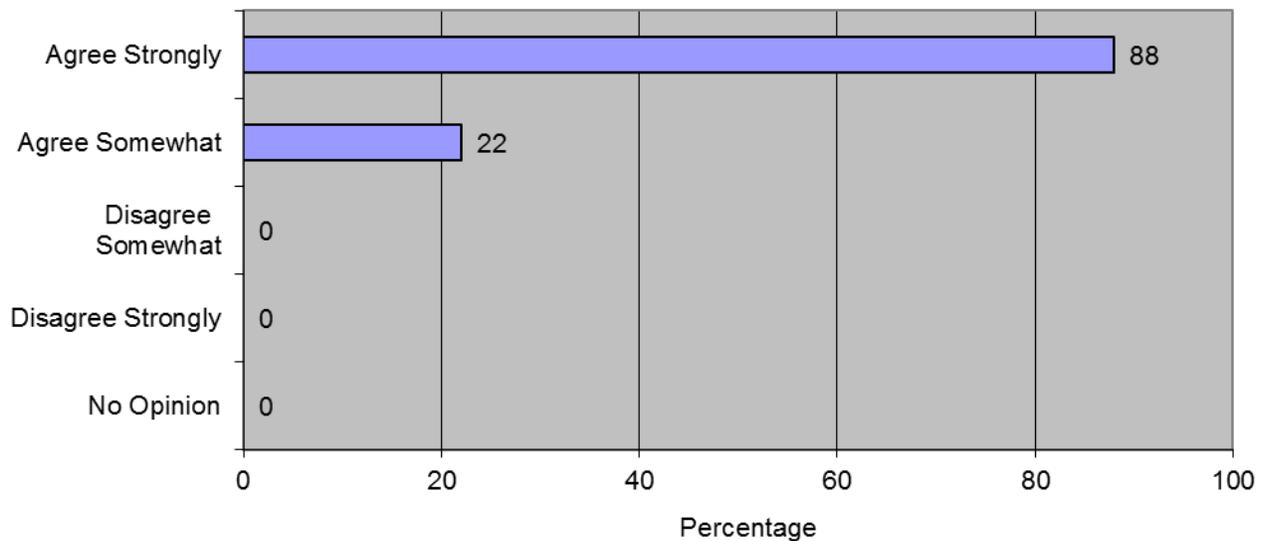
Town of Amherst
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Community Survey, Cont.

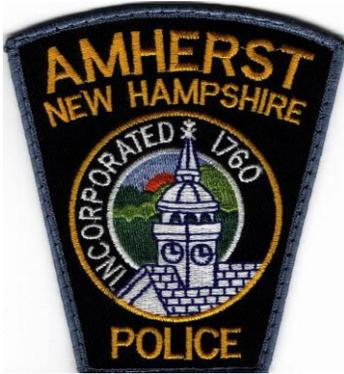
Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following:

I feel informed about public safety concerns in town



Amherst is a safe place to live





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Appendix B
Request for Additional Police Officers
Explanation and Supporting Information

The police department is currently staffed with 18 full-time police officers and one full-time executive assistant, along with one part-time administrative assistant and two part-time school crossing guards. Of those 18 full-time officers, 12 are assigned to the patrol division in accordance with the agency’s organizational structure.

Over the last 12 years, additions have been made to the support functions of the police department in the form of two school resource officers and a second detective position. However, no officers have been added to the patrol division since 1998. For the last 17 years, the department has operated with 12 patrol officers.

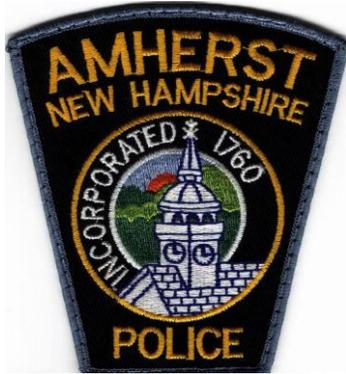
Statistics show that the average statewide and national staffing level for comparably-sized communities is 1.8 officers per one-thousand residents. Based upon an estimated 12,000 residents, the Amherst Police Department is currently staffed at only 1.5 officers per one-thousand residents (or 1.4 based upon a more recent though informal population estimate of 13,000). A survey of eight similarly-sized New Hampshire communities showed that only two towns –Amherst and Windham– are staffed at a level of 1.5 officers per one-thousand residents.

Population (approximate)	Town	Officer/Resident Ratio	*Full-Time Clerical Staff	*Facility Size (sq. ft.)
12,000	Amherst	1.5	1	5,000
14,500	Exeter	1.6	3	7,500
12,000	Hanover	1.9	2	N/A
14,000	Hooksett	1.9	3	15,000
13,000	Lebanon	2.5	4	13,800
15,500	Milford	1.6	4	14,000
13,000	Pelham	1.6	2	N/A
13,500	Windham	1.5	1	13,506
**7,500	Hollis	1.9	1	11,000

*additional data related to other strategic plan initiatives

**below population parameter but included for neighboring comparison

Based upon the state and national average of 1.8 officers per one-thousand residents, the Amherst Police Department should be staffed between 21 and 22 officers instead of the current complement of 18 officers. As mentioned in the current strategic plan, the department is seeking approval to hire two additional officers –one in FY17 and one in FY19- to help offset this deficiency and to avoid continued staffing setbacks.



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Appendix B, Cont.
Request for Additional Police Officers
Explanation and Supporting Information

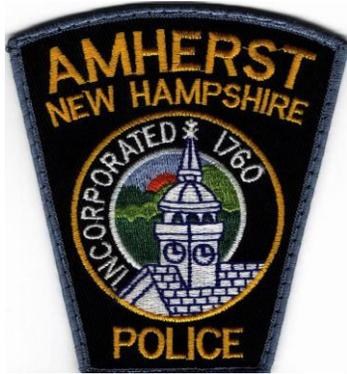
Public discussion and the need to add to the patrol division has been a recurring theme for over ten years. In 2005, the department conducted a staffing projection study which anticipated the need for three additional patrol officers by 2010. In that report, the department correctly identified precipitating factors for this staffing increase such as increasing commercial development in southern New Hampshire and the need to address growing traffic safety concerns.

In addition to an increased demand for police services, the department must contend with lower staffing availability as employee retention improves. The average length of service for officers within the department is just over nine years, with 44% having served more than 10 years with the agency. With employee longevity comes increased vacation benefit accruals and a resulting decrease in officer availability. When combined with annual in-service police training commitments, the department is faced with filling in excess of 54 weeks of combined vacation and training absences each year through schedule swapping and overtime assignments. This figure does not even take into account the use sick time or personal day accruals which can average an additional 12 weeks of needed shift coverage each year.

Much of the success of the Amherst Police Department is a direct result of the philosophy of maintaining a highly visible and active patrol force which discourages criminal activity and encourages safer driving. Department survey results and general citizen feedback clearly demonstrate that the community is primarily concerned with property crime and traffic safety, and both are directly improved through an increased police presence in our residential areas. However, since 2005 the average number of calls for service along the Route 101A business corridor alone has increased 40%. This obligation to provide increased services to the commercial district has resulted in decreased police presence in our neighborhoods.

For roughly 25 years, the department has recognized three designated patrol sectors in town (north, central, and south) in order to maximize police visibility and minimize response time. Also for the last 25 years, the department has operated with a “two-car minimum” staffing approach. In short, the community has been assured that at least two patrol cars will be in town and on duty 24 hours a day – one in the north end of town, and one in the south end (central sector assigned only as staffing allows). More recently, the department has also recognized a fourth patrol sector due to the increasing commercial growth and development along Route 101A (that sector too is assigned only as staffing and shift overlap allows).

The primary focus of the Amherst Police Department for FY17 is to change the “two-car” minimum patrol model to a “three-car” minimum patrol model. As indicated, the agency currently provides occasional three-car coverage to the town, but current staffing (when combined with the



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Appendix B, Cont.
Request for Additional Police Officers
Explanation and Supporting Information

aforementioned officer-availability factors) allows for three-car coverage only 69% of the time. Adding one officer would increase that three-car coverage percentage to roughly 93%. A second officer would provide 100% three-car coverage and provide additional flexibility to help meet the developing need for four-sector coverage. A third officer would bring the department in line with recognized state and national staffing levels for municipalities with populations of 10,000-15,000 residents, and would allow the department to provide the best possible level of service to the town.

The cost for a new officer -including salary, benefits, and equipment – is approximately \$83,000. In the absence of that officer, the department would need to expend roughly \$118,000 in additional overtime expenses to commit to the needed three-car patrol model. Not only is that overtime cost prohibitive, but providing for that additional (2,628 hours) coverage is also unrealistic due to the excessive burden that would be placed on our existing staff in the face of the current officer-availability factors already discussed.

